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ACCESS TO ELECTORAL RIGHTS *EL SALVADOR*

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Access to electoral rights

El Salvador

Eduardo Alberto Cuéllar Navidad

1. Introduction

Located in Central America, El Salvador obtained its independence from Spain in 1821. During the first period of its independence it was part of the Central American Republic (also known as the United Provinces of Central America), including Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.¹ However, during most of its history it has been a unitary state.

The current 1983 Constitution (art. 85) establishes that the government is republican, democratic and representative. The political system is pluralist and is expressed through political parties, which are the only instrument or channel for the representation of the people within the government, the norms and organisation of which shall be subject to the principles of representative democracy. Therefore, the existence of a single official party is incompatible with the democratic system and with the form of government established in the Constitution. The fundamental organs of the government are the legislative, the executive, and the judicial branches (art. 86). Also, El Salvador is a presidential state and has a unicameral assembly.

Due to the ten-year civil war that affected the country in the 1980s, a significant share of the population emigrated – mainly to the USA. According to the latest census, El Salvador has 5,744,113 people in its territory (Ministry of Economy 2007: 25) and in accordance with the ‘Salvadoran Migration Map’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011), 2,950,126 Salvadorans live abroad, of which 2,587,767 in the US alone. Unsurprisingly, Salvadorans abroad have sought greater participation in political decisions taken at ‘home’. Their economic contribution is significant: remittances represent 16.4 per cent of El Salvador’s GDP with a contribution to the economy of almost four billion USD in 2014.²

The civil war ended with the signature of the Chapultepec Peace Accords on 16 February 1992, in Mexico City, between the Salvadoran Government and the belligerent group Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN as in Spanish). The end of the war created a more appropriate political and social environment to the development and exercise of civil and political rights in El Salvador (Fortin 2005: 548). Before the Peace Accords, electoral fraud was a common practice of the government and as a consequence, the exercise of political rights was practically denied, especially for the opposition (Webre 1985).

¹ Central America has a prolific history of unification movements, starting with its independence in 1821 and the creation of the first Central American Republic (1823-1841). Other examples of integration include the creation of the Central American States Organisation in 1951, establishing a regional common market; the ‘Esquipulas Process’ in the 1980s setting up a framework for peaceful conflict resolution; and the Central American System for Integration (SICA) created in 1991 (Villalta 2013: 449).

² El Diario de Hoy, 17 December 2014,

http://www.elsalvador.com/mwedh/nota/nota_completa.asp?idCat=47861&idArt=9326338

Some of the main changes that came in the Peace Accords were, for example, the reform of the electoral system, the demobilisation of security forces which had violated human rights, the creation of a non-political and non-military force to maintain public order, the total separation of military from electoral and governmental matters.

The Peace Accords are made of three distinct documents. Among them, the 1991 Mexico Agreement established the need to carry out several amendments to the 1983 Constitution, including the creation of a new Electoral Administration. However, those changes primarily focused on the structure or composition of the new institution, while the practicalities remained largely identical to the previous electoral management body. The Electoral Code establishes the powers of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (SET), its main task being to organise presidential elections, Legislative Assembly elections and Central American Parliament elections, as well as municipal elections. The SET is also responsible for counting the ballots, solving potential electoral disputes and announcing the results of each election.³

From 1993 to 2014, ten uninterrupted and legitimate elections were held (Artiga 2004: 16). In 1994, 1999 and 2004 the political party Republican Nationalist Alliance (ARENA as in Spanish) won the presidential elections. ARENA is a right wing party founded in 1981. Whose main objective is ‘to defend western tradition against permanent ideological attacks by international communism and other ideologies and by political organisations threatening the institutional life of El Salvador which is based on the following principles: nationalism, democracy and freedom’ (Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo Foundation 2011: 8). The founder of this party was former military officer Roberto D’Aubuisson, who was responsible for giving the order to kill Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez (Archbishop of San Salvador, the country’s chief ecclesiastical division) on 24 March 1980 by a death squad, according to the report of the Truth Commission for Peace Consolidation in El Salvador (United Nations 1993).

It was not until 2009 that the Salvadoran process of democratic consolidation took a new turn, with the victory of the FMLN (ex-guerilla and political party since 1993) in the presidential elections. During the electoral campaign the incumbent government (ARENA) drove a negative campaign, trying to generate fear among the population by persuading citizens to defend their homeland and liberties. ARENA and its allies generated a hostile environment that, rather than promoting dialogue or tolerance, led to antagonism (Chávez 2010: 100). However, the change of government occurred without notable incidents and FMLN, now led by a former guerilla commander, won the presidential elections again in 2014.

It was also in 2014 that the vote from abroad was implemented. The law allowing Salvadorans to vote from abroad was passed with the unanimous support of all political parties in the National Assembly, following lengthy lobbying from organisations of Salvadorans living abroad whose efforts led to the bill presented by the former President Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena. For the first time in the country’s history, citizens abroad were granted the right to participate in national elections without having to return to El Salvador on election day (Social Initiative for the Democracy 2012: 24).

After reviewing the historical developments of the franchise in El Salvador, the present report discusses in detail the scope and conditions of exercise of political rights of Salvadoran nationals residing within the country and abroad as well as those of foreign residents.

³ Electoral Code, *Official Journal*, 2013, articles 63 and 64.

2. Historical overview

Notwithstanding its long-standing self-definition as a democratic country, the suffrage in El Salvador has not consistently been universal, egalitarian and free. As in other countries, the scope for the franchise has been subjected to struggles and contestations that have accompanied the country's long and at times difficult democratisation process.

At the time of independence, the Spanish 1812 Cadiz Constitution was still in force in El Salvador and the first Salvadoran Constitution was in the process of being drafted. Historically, the right to vote was given by Salvadoran constitutions only to citizens and not to every national. Consequently, Salvadoran constitutions made a clear distinction between citizens and nationals. In general, everyone who is born in the country or whose father or mother is a native Salvadoran is considered a national, but only persons who become a citizen under Salvadoran law enjoy political rights. Therefore, nationality might be considered as a prerequisite to become a citizen or, to put it another way, a citizen must be a national.

Acquiring nationality in El Salvador has always been possible by both *ius sanguinis* and *ius soli*. The current 1983 Constitution establishes that the following persons are considered Salvadoran by birth: 1) those born in the territory of El Salvador (*ius soli*), 2) the children of a Salvadoran father or mother who are born in a foreign country (*ius sanguinis*), 3) persons born in the other states that historically constituted the Central American Republic (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica) who are currently domiciled in El Salvador and declare before the competent authorities their desire to be Salvadoran. The latter option does not require such individuals to renounce their nationality of origin and gives them the same political rights as a Salvadoran by birth.

Also, according to the 1983 Constitution, Salvadorans by birth have the right to enjoy dual or multiple nationality. The status of Salvadoran by birth is lost only through an explicit renunciation before a competent authority and may be recovered by petition before the same (art. 91).

Nationality by naturalisation may be acquired in four ways: 1) by native Spaniards and Hispano-Americans with the requirement of one year's residence in the country; 2) by foreigners of any origin with the requirement of five years' residence in the country; by special decision of the legislature for those who render noteworthy services to the Republic; by a foreigner who marries a Salvadoran (male or female) with two years' residence in the country prior to or after the time of marriage. In the above cases, nationality by naturalisation is granted by the competent authorities in conformity with the law (art. 92). However, nationality by naturalisation may be lost by foreigners who subsequently reside for more than two consecutive years in the country of origin, or by absence from the territory of the Republic for more than five consecutive years, unless permission was granted in conformity with the law.

As regards nationality, the 1983 Constitution recognises that international treaties shall regulate the form and conditions under which foreigners from countries that were not part of the Federal Republic of Central America can maintain their nationality upon naturalisation in El Salvador, but only when the principle of reciprocity is respected (art. 93). That is, an individual may maintain dual nationality upon naturalisation as a Salvadoran, provided her or his country of origin allows for retention of nationality. While El Salvador has ratified important international treaties that protect human rights, there is no relevant international treaty concerning nationality signed by the Salvadoran state.

The concept of citizenship and its methods of acquisition have changed from the early regulations to those current. Historically, an individual attained citizenship if he or she was a national by birth and upon reaching the age of majority (21 under the first constitutions, but later changed to 18) with certain other (changing) requirements. These requirements included: being a male citizen and a parent, being literate, owning property, and even, under the 1864 and 1871 Constitutions, having a further education degree (see art.5 of the 1841 Constitution and subsequent Constitutions). These early constitutions were ambiguous in the regulations on citizenship acquisition in that whilst attaining the age of majority was a requirement, other situations were considered 'optional', such as being a parent or having a further education degree. It is unclear why these 'optional situations' appeared on the regulations and how authorities would verify them, but what is clear is that these 'optional situations' constituted significant barriers to the exercise of the franchise.

Taking under consideration the ambiguity of these early constitutional regulations, the 1939 Constitution was the first to establish age as a unique requirement, considering citizens those nationals having reached the age of eighteen. Importantly, the 1939 Constitution lifted the sex requirement, thereby opening the way for women to vote. The same Constitution established that the Electoral Law would henceforth regulate the franchise. Somewhat paradoxically, from 1939, El Salvador had a military dictatorship under Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, and yet implemented these constitutional reforms, which impacted the franchise far more than those of earlier periods.

In 1944, the military dictatorship was overthrown, after a series of social struggles and a general strike. The new government restored the validity of the 1886 Constitution, revoking the 1939 Constitution and thus reversing the reforms. However, three months later, on October 21st, a new coup (known as the 'Osminato' coup) occurred (Fortín 2005: 36). Again, a military government drafted a new Constitution, this one essentially the same as the one from 1886, but reintroducing the sex requirement and therefore disenfranchising women. During the year of 1944, there were three different Constitutions in force although in different periods, from January to July, from July to October and from October onwards.

It wasn't until 1950 that a fundamentally new Constitution was drafted, recognising citizenship for people over eighteen years of age, regardless of their sex. From this moment, women suffrage truly began to be exercised. The 1962 Constitution reaffirmed the 1950 fundamental regulation on citizenship.

Although the 1983 Constitution uses gender neutral language, women's franchise is implicit inasmuch as the law refers to the 'human person as the origin and purpose of the activity of the State' (art. 1). Therefore every fundamental right and liberty established in the text is equally recognised for both women and men. In addition, Art.3 explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex: 'all persons are equal before the law. For the enjoyment of civil rights, no restrictions shall be established that are based on differences of nationality, race, sex or religion'-. This is the legal basis to consider that women have the same rights as men.

Thirty years later, in 2013, a gender quota for the Legislative Assembly was set by the newly created Political Party Law.⁴ According to Art. 37 of that law, political parties are obliged to present lists of candidates with at least 30 per cent women. This rule is mandatory for legislative and local mayoral elections. The only case in which this rule does not apply is for the presidential election. It is also important to mention that the gender quota is a temporary rule, since it will only be mandatory for the next five elections for the Legislative Assembly and the next four for the Central American Parliament (art. 88). This rule was debated extensively between political parties, since there was no agreement about the percentage of the quota or the inclusion of the rule.⁵ Consequently, it was decided to adopt a rule with limited duration.

In addition to the limitations regarding the exercise of suffrage that have been described, in El Salvador there is no special electoral regulation for ethnic or racial minorities.

3. Eligibility: Who has electoral rights under national law?

3.1. Citizen residents

The 1983 Constitution states that every Salvadoran citizen who is over eighteen years of age may exercise the suffrage, form political parties or join those already formed and stand as candidate for any public office (art. 71 and 72). The same rule has been transcribed literally in the Electoral Code (EC).⁶ The Constitution also specifies the minimum age for standing as a candidate in presidential, legislative and municipal elections: 30, 25 and 21 (art. 151, art. 126, art. 202) years of age, respectively.

⁴ Political Party Law, *Official Journal*, 2013.

⁵ *La Prensa Gráfica*, 15 February 2013. <http://www.laprensagrafica.com/politicos-avalan-ley-de-partidos-sin-dientes>.

⁶ Electoral Code, *Official Journal*, 2013.

The 1983 Constitution also introduced two grounds for excluding citizens of the enjoyment of their political rights: suspension and loss, depending on the gravity of the reasons that motivate the decision. Citizenship may be suspended if an arrest warrant has been issued and on grounds of insanity, judicial interdiction and refusal to hold an elected office (art. 74). Article 75 similarly regulates cases of loss of political rights in cases of misconduct, felony, electoral fraud, actions related to presidential re-election, and limitation of freedom of suffrage. In all cases, a judicial ruling must precede the disenfranchisement and the decision regarding rehabilitation lies within the hands of the Supreme Court of Justice, with the exception of cases of felony, which are decided upon by the Courts of Prison Supervision. Citizens convicted for felony lose their political rights, including the right to vote and to stand as candidate. The limitations on political rights for convicted felons have no exception.

Likewise, the political rights of persons who have been found mentally disabled by a final decision of the court are suspended. In the case of persons who are indicted but not convicted, according to the Constitution, it remains possible for them to exercise their political rights. However, there are no conditions in prisons to assure their rights and the Government has no policy to assure that these persons can exercise their voting rights. The electoral system also does not take into consideration the ambulatory condition of voters, which may be limited because individuals are in prison, or if they suffer some illness that prevents them from reaching their polling station. Equally, there is no explicit recognition by the government of a need to guarantee voting rights for those who lack the financial resources to reach polling stations, even though it may be thought of as an obvious restriction in a country that suffers chronic under-development.

In addition to the rules to exclude citizens of the enjoyment of their political rights, the 1983 Constitution also details some circumstances which inhibit citizens from participating as candidates. In the case of the presidential election, article 152 establishes that the following categories of person shall not be candidates for the President of the Republic:

1. A person who has already filled the Presidency of the Republic for more than six months, consecutive or not, during the period immediately prior to, or within the last six months prior to the beginning of the presidential period;
2. The spouse and relatives within the fourth degree of consanguinity or second of affinity of any of the persons who have exercised the Presidency in the cases [included in] the preceding ordinal;
3. person who has been President of the Legislative Assembly or President of the Supreme Court of Justice during the year prior to the day that initiates the presidential period;
4. A person who has been Minister, Vice Minister of State, or President of any official autonomous institution, or the General Director of the national civil police force, within the last year of the immediately previous presidential term;
5. Professional military persons who were in active service, or who have been so within the three years prior to the day of the beginning of the presidential period;
6. The Vice President or the designate who, when legally called to exercise the Presidency in the immediately preceding period, refused to fill it without just cause, meaning that this exists when the Vice President or the designate manifests his or her intention to be a candidate to the Presidency of the Republic within the six months prior to the beginning of the presidential period;

7. Persons included in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th ordinals of article 127 of this Constitution. These conditions refer to requirement of solvency in the handling of public funds, that an individual should not have contractual relationships with the state, and rules regarding kinship with the president of the republic.

Other prohibitions to stand as a candidate in an election at any level apply to religious leaders, as well as active members of the armed forces and of the national civil police force. These persons are further prohibited from membership in political parties, and they may not stand for any elected office. Moreover, they may not produce political propaganda in any form (art. 82). The rules applying to the military stem from El Salvador's past experience with military governments, most of which were imposed by force. Thus, the Peace Accords had as one of their objectives the demobilisation of the military corps and the restriction of their participation in politics and government. However, once retired, members of the military may stand as candidates in elections or join political parties. As a matter of fact, currently there are members of congress and members of political parties who are former militaries. Religious leaders are barred from participation in politics in El Salvador, in common with other Latin American countries, since they are perceived to already wield strong influence among both their co-religionists and in society. However, whether or not former religious leaders (either because they left the religious institution or retired) may stand as candidate is unclear. In practice, no such cases have presented themselves.

3.2. Citizens abroad

Eligibility Criteria

Traditionally, the suffrage in all types and levels of elections has been reserved to those who are both permanent residents and this remains the case for legislative and local mayoral elections. However, in 2009, for the first time, Salvadorans living abroad were able to vote in presidential elections following an electoral reform.⁷ The law allows Salvadorans living abroad to exercise the right to vote upon presentation of his or her National Identification Document (NID). However, this new ruling was still predicated on the voter being present in El Salvador on the day of elections to cast a ballot at a designated polling station within the country (Villalta & Urbina: 2009:21).

To this end, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal has established special polling stations in the country for those Salvadorans who had no Salvadoran address specified on their NID. While there was no regulation that facilitated voting from abroad in 2009, there was also no formal prohibition to do so either. The Supreme Electoral Tribunal therefore decided to create a special polling station in El Salvador to allow those Salvadorans permanently living abroad to vote, as long as they were visiting the country. In the 2009 elections, only 294 citizens participated in this way out of a total number of 39,463 Salvadorans that were registered as living abroad on their NID cards (Supreme Electoral Tribunal 2009: 27, 259).

⁷ Special transitional law regulating the procedures for the exercise of voting rights of Salvadorans living abroad, registered in the electoral register for the election of President and Vice President in 2009, *Official Journal*, 2009.

According to recent estimates, the total number of Salvadoran citizens living outside the country is 2,950,126 (Supreme Electoral Tribunal 2014). In the 2014 elections, the ‘Special Law for the Exercise of Vote from Abroad in Presidential Elections’ was applied for the first time.⁸ Voters received an electoral package containing a ballot paper and a return envelope to post to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in El Salvador. This mechanism formally eliminates the need for emigrants to travel to polling stations either within El Salvador, or at embassies or consulates abroad. However, there were practical difficulties in the implementation law, which led to fewer than 2,600 citizens abroad being able to cast their vote.

In general, Salvadorans living abroad have no limitations with respect to eligibility to stand as a candidate for positions within El Salvador. An exception to that rule is set for municipal elections. Here candidates need to currently reside within or originate from the town in which they are standing as candidate.

There is no limitation on dual or multiple nationals standing as candidates for presidential and legislative elections, provided they are Salvadorans by birth. Art. 91 determines that Salvadorans by birth have the right to enjoy dual or multiple nationality. Therefore, the fundamental requirement for election at these levels is to be Salvadoran by birth.

In contrast to the ambiguity regarding residency requirements, the 1983 Constitution specifically establishes that Salvadorans by naturalisation may not stand as candidates in presidential elections (art. 151), or in legislative elections (art. 126). However, they may be candidates in municipal elections (art. 202). For presidential election the Constitution not only requires all candidates to be Salvadoran by birth and not by naturalisation, but also *sui generis*, i.e. to have at least one parent who is a Salvadoran national.

Mode of representation

Since Salvadorans living abroad may only vote in presidential elections, there are no systems of special representation. Presidential elections function with one single national constituency, where the president represents all Salvadorans, whether they live in the country or abroad.

Art. 79 of the Constitution, which states that constituencies must in the territory of the country (art. 79), is the main obstacle to the creation of special representation for Salvadorians living abroad in Parliament. A constitutional amendment seems to be necessary to achieve this goal, but has so far not encountered any support among the main political parties.

⁸ Special Law for the exercise of voting from abroad in presidential elections, *Official Journal*, 2013.

Foreign residents

The Constitution stipulates that foreigners, from the moment they arrive in the territory of the Republic, must respect the authorities and obey the laws of El Salvador, and acquire the right to be protected by them. However, no category of foreigners enjoys any electoral rights. The Constitution even states that foreigners who directly or indirectly participate in the internal politics of the country shall lose the right to reside in it. The Electoral Code is worded in similar terms and establishes that foreigners participating in political activities will be expelled from the territory (art. 247 EC).⁹

4. Exercising electoral rights

Registration Procedure: Becoming a voter

The 1983 Constitution (art. 77) and the Electoral Code (art. 5) state that it is an essential requirement for the exercise of the suffrage to be registered in the Electoral Registry elaborated by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. Registration is automatic when an individual obtains his or her Unique Identification Document at the age of eighteen. These identification documents form the basis for the Electoral Registry. Citizens do not need to take any additional steps to exercise their voting rights, regardless of the type of election at issue. As a warranty, the legally registered political parties have the right to watch over the compilation, organisation, publication and updating of the Electoral Registry. The Electoral Registry is a product of the Peace Accords, specifically the 1991 Mexico Accords. The objective of the Registry is to give more certainty and assurance about the number and the identification of voters in electoral processes, thereby avoiding past problems such as double voting and electoral fraud. Likewise, the implementation of a unique identification document, and of a new centralised institution in charge of controlling and updating this new Registry of Individuals¹⁰ (RNPN) is an important element of the electoral reforms implemented since 1991.

As has been mentioned, El Salvador is a unitary state. The regulation of elections is therefore not as complex as in federal states, where sub-national units often have the possibility of establishing their own rules.

Non resident citizens must also register on a special electoral roll. The procedure for registration can be made personally when an individual obtains the Unique Identification Document abroad, electronically, or personally at the office of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in San Salvador. The form to be submitted in order to be registered on the special electoral roll for citizens abroad contains the date of application, name, Unique Identification Document, address abroad, email, proof of not having renounced Salvadoran nationality and a statement that the information provided is true (art. 8 Special Law for the exercise of vote from abroad in presidential elections). Since the government does not have the capacity or resources to issue the Unique Identification Document in every foreign country, it is currently only issued in the US and Canada, where most Salvadoran expatriates live.

⁹ It is important to stress that this rule has been applied very rarely> there are very few cases where a foreigner was expelled from the territory on the ground of having participated in political activities.

¹⁰ Special Law for the regulation of the Unique Identification Document, Oficial Jounal, 2001.

Registration procedure: becoming a candidate

To stand as a candidate in any kind of election in El Salvador, an individual must register before the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (in the case of presidential and legislative elections) or before the Departmental Electoral Board (in the case of municipal elections) (art. 143 EC). Departmental Electoral Boards have jurisdiction over the registration of candidates to those municipalities within the territory of the department. El Salvador's administrative division consists of 14 departments or regions subdivided into 262 municipalities. Every local government is formed of a municipal council headed by a Mayor, a civil magistrate and a number of council members ranging from two to twelve councilors and four alternate councilors, depending on the city's total population.

Generally, candidates must be nominated by a political party. However, In the case of legislative elections, a decision of the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice on 29 July 2010 found that citizens should be allowed to participate as independent candidates. Since 2012, El Salvador has had two elections with the participation of independent candidates. However, very few people have had the chance to run as an independent candidate because the requirements under the law are very difficult to meet.

Among the documents an individual must present in order to run as candidate are: a birth certificate, a copy of the Unique Identification Document, affidavits about alimony solvency, fiscal and municipal solvency, nomination of the candidate by the political party, as well as solvency for those who have handled public funds (art. 152, 160 and 165 EC).

In the case of the president of the republic and in addition to the prohibitions outlined above, the Constitution establishes that to be stand as a candidate, an individual must be over thirty years of age, be of good morality, not having being deprived of his/her political rights, for a minimum period of six years preceding the election; and to be affiliated with one of the legally recognised political parties.

The requirements for the position of Deputy are similar, with the exceptions that a candidate must be over twenty-five and need only prove that he or she has not lost the rights of citizenship within the previous five years before the election (art. 126).

Casting the vote

Salvadorans living in the country can vote at the polling station of the constituency in which they are registered, which is the municipality where they officially reside. On election day, citizens vote at a polling station within their municipality, usually close to their home address. An individual must present his or her UID to the polling station board, who then verify registration on the electoral roll. Upon confirmation, the individual is given a ballot (or ballots) and a marker. Votes are made in secret and afterwards the marked ballot is deposited in a ballot box and the voter's UID is returned. Finally, the voter must sign the electoral roll as proof that she or he has voted (arts. 196, 197 EC).

Under the 'Special Law for the Exercise of Vote from Abroad in Presidential Elections', Salvadorans living abroad vote by postal ballot before the day of the election, (art. 16). Any postal votes that arrive after the day of election are destroyed and a notice is sent to the voter (art.19).

5. Conclusion

In El Salvador, the scope of the franchise has evolved considerably since its independence and the first constitutional regulations, from a privilege reserved to a limited number of persons to a truly universal right. At present, it is recognised as an egalitarian and non-discriminatory right for every citizen. To become a citizen, one must hold Salvadoran nationality, be eighteen years of age and be registered in the Electoral Registry upon obtaining a Unique Identification Document.

The most recent changes to the franchise have concerned the rights of citizens living abroad who are now able to vote in presidential elections via postal ballot. However, a cumbersome registration procedure severely restricts their ability to actually cast a ballot from abroad.

Non-citizen residents do not enjoy any political rights, unlike many other Latin American countries. Although attempts have been made by the Central American countries to come together and engage in a integration project, very few positive results have been achieved so far. Unlike the European Union, the Central American Integrational System does not grant political rights to Member States nationals. However, people from Central America are in a privileged position as regard the acquisition of Salvadoran nationality, which remains a core requirement to the exercise of political rights.

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